

Angels & DEMONS

"I have seen the future of horror and his name is Clive Barker."



So said Stephen King of the Liverpool born writer, filmmaker, playwright and artist who set a new benchmark in horror fiction in the mid eighties with his short story collections, the *Books of Blood*. Characterised by eloquent prose spiced with sexual perversity, visceral horror and affection for the monstrous, Barker's work is ferociously original and outrageously imaginative; conjuring fantastic worlds lurking just beyond the threshold of our own, where monsters are beautiful and gender is fluid. His *Books of Blood* allowed readers to perceive such horrors and wonders as a sentient cancer sustained by Hollywood glamour (*Son of Celluloid*), an urban legend made flesh (*The Forbidden*), a voracious pagan god on the rampage (*Rawhead Rex*), and a puzzle box that unlocks the gates of Hell (*The Hellbound Heart*).

The visual nature of Barker's stories made them ideal candidates for movie adaptations. However, following a pair of disastrous attempts to realise *Rawhead Rex* and *Underworld* – the latter based on an original screenplay by Barker – onscreen, the writer decided that if you want something done properly, you do it yourself.

Adapting his novella *The Hellbound Heart*, Barker made his directorial debut with *Hellraiser* in 1987, creating not only one of the best horror films of the '80s but a new horror icon in the demon known as Pinhead. Barker had successfully translated the essence of his writing onto film; the funereal atmosphere, surreal sensibility and unapologetic approach to gore and sexuality were all intact, further validating Stephen King's big call.

Inevitably, the success of *Hellraiser* spawned a pair of theatrical sequels – *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* (1988) and *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* (1992), which Barker oversaw as executive producer – prior to becoming a direct-to-video franchise that upheld

the law of diminishing returns.

Barker's next job in the director's chair was *Nightbreed* (1990), a studio compromised monster movie based on his novel *Cabal* in which a young man (Craig Sheffer) becomes an unlikely saviour to a tribe of exotic creatures. A flawed but fun cult movie enhanced by the novelty casting of fellow horror filmmaker David Cronenberg, *Nightbreed's* elusive 'Director's Cut' remains high on the wish list of every Barker fan.

Disillusioned by the experience on *Nightbreed*, it would be five years before Barker's next film as director. *Lord of Illusions* (1995) was a stylish tale of magic and mayhem featuring the author's paranormal private eye Harry D'Amour (played by Scott Bakula). A more polished production than *Nightbreed*, Barker had final cut for the film's video release.

In the interim, Barker served as a producer on Bernard Rose's *Candyman* (1992), a terrific adaptation of the *Books of Blood* story *The Forbidden*.

Barker has not directed since *Lord of Illusions*, although his works continue to be visualised by other filmmakers; the latest being a gore-soaked version of *The Midnight Meat Train*, another *Books of Blood* standout story. Japanese director Ryuhei Kitamura has brought Barker's one-way ticket to public transport hell to vivid life, working from a (mostly faithful) screenplay by Jeff Buhler.

Barker continues to work on his multi-book fantasy epic *Abarat* whilst indulging his overactive imagination in his other great passion: painting. He's also dabbled in other media like video games (*Jericho*), comic books, collectible figurines based on his creations and nude photography.

Upcoming Clive Barker-related film projects include *Book of Blood*, *Dread* and a remake of *Hellraiser* currently in development.

***The Midnight Meat Train* is released on DVD and Blu-ray on July 15.**

